

THE LABOUR ORGANISER.

No. 5.

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THE PROPOSED CONFERENCE OF LOCAL LABOUR NEWSPAPERS.

Progress of the "Labour Organiser" Proposal.

BY THE EDITOR.

The article in last month's LABOUR ORGANISER definitely proposing a conference of those interested in local Labour newspapers has attracted widespread attention and approval. Our article suggested that matters for the consideration of a conference might well consist of suggestions for closer co-operation in regard to news supply, advertisement income, stimulus to circulation, etc. That the proposal has hit the mark is obvious from the approval that has been accorded in many quarters, and the principal question remaining is, when a conference might be held. The Editor of the LABOUR ORGANISER proposes during the current month to get further in touch with certain journals to ascertain their views as to plans and proposals, and the outcome will be announced later.

From a conversation we have had with Mr. W. W. Henderson, the new Press Secretary to the Party, we gather that a conference would be warmly welcomed in that quarter.

Indeed, the local newspapers of the Movement form so obviously an important and telling part of the Party's publicity weapons, that the question of closer connection between each other, and between them and the machinery of the Party, fairly shouts for consideration. Consultation must take place, newer and closer contacts be created, fresh services brought into being, and this powerful arm in Labour's armoury made fit to hold its own in the keen fights for existence against its capitalistic contemporaries.

Distinguishable as the Labour Party is for its industrial origin and foundation, and almost unassailable as it should be, deriving its strength from such herculean sources, yet great

inroads are made upon its numbers and its resources by the power of its opponents' united press, both national and local. One reads of 'one weekly journal claiming to be read in the homes of over 3,250,000 people, and another daily journal with nett sales of 7,500,000 per week. One cannot successfully combat what is so essentially an estate of the realm we live in by affecting to ignore it. Nor will people take our advice not to buy it, or to read it, or to believe it. There is abundant evidence that they do all three.

What, then, is Labour's course? *It is undeniable that the local journal is the greatest force we have, or can handle, or can build up, to combat our newspaper opponents in the home.* We have only one daily paper, and we plainly cannot start any more—yet. It is unthinkable that we could build for it a circulation equal to all the others combined; and that would leave untouched the mass of weekly journals and the gigantic circulations of the Sunday papers. We must try other directions at the same time as we push our daily—and that direction is the local weekly journal.

With so much depending on the effectiveness and power of the weekly journal the Party can no longer neglect its well-being, its resources, its combination, or its business problems. Every influence should be set to work to make existing journals flourishing and to extend their circulation; and further, to build up a network of new enterprises corresponding to the extent and power of the Party's activities in the constituencies.

That's what the conference is to consider—has your Committee expressed its view?

OUT OF THE RUT.



ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS IN BRIEF.


We have this month received a large number of matters intended for this column, but in few cases are the secretaries explicit enough, and we are therefore holding over some items for further information. It is not sufficient to say you are doing so and so, that you have adopted a special campaign for members, a new style of publicity, run a dance, or bought a brewery. How does it work? Does it pay? How did you organise it? Please be kind enough to add a few lines as indicated to allyou send the Editor, and he and others will gladly thank you.

A live suggestion is to hand from Mr. C. W. Wilkinson, of Portsmouth, who writes as follows:—

"Here's a tip, particularly useful for rural constituencies that are just being tackled. The first item of expenditure that I asked the South Hants Div. L.P. to agree to was 12s. 6d. for a banner (without poles). Two yards of calico, edges bound, tapes at each corner, painted in four colours, black, red, green, pink, painted by a ticket writer, thus:—

SOUTH HANTS LABOUR PARTY.

Meeting  Here  To-night

At  p.m.

Also two small pieces, marked 6.30 and 7.30 respectively, to pin or tack over '7.0' as required.

This was tied across the front of a trolley, between two trees, along a hedge or fence, etc., in the village visited by a party of cyclists or others an hour or two before the meeting. It provided a means of advertising cheaply when bills were too expensive and when no local group of workers were available to do the distributing. It is still used as a supplementary advertisement and a reminder."

Apropos of the sample of individual membership card recently illustrated in the LABOUR ORGANISER, Mr. P. F.

Pollard, of Chelmsford, kindly sends a sample of the method adopted in his constituency. The counterfoil system is used, but for the use of local officers who receive subscriptions and members, there are two tear-offs. The first tear-off is the receipt and certificate of membership. The second contains particulars of membership and is sent in immediately to the Divisional Secretary. The part remaining in the book is, of course, a record of the transaction for the holder's own use. This device for immediately notifying the Divisional Secretary of a payment or an entrant has very much in its favour, and if carried out conscientiously by the workers should prove of value in maintaining efficiency.

An interesting experiment has recently been tried in the Watford Division. A member of the Party, with considerable experience in canvassing, was engaged on a salary as a special canvasser for individual members. It is too early yet to give the result of the experiment over an extended period, but it has certainly started off well. Eight pounds was collected by the canvasser during the first week, though it is too much to expect that this sum will be kept up. The main essential to such a scheme is, of course, the right sort of man, one with canvassing experience and ability, unimpeachable honesty and sterling interest in the work. Watford, with no outstanding industries, and a large "dormitory" population is by no means the easiest constituency to tackle in this way. There are scores of constituencies where thousands of individual members ought to be enrolled, and it is puerile to suggest that this is not possible, when constituencies can be pointed to with 13,000 to 15,000 affiliated members. What about the wives of these? Given the right man, the arithmetic concerning his salary should be all right. It would obviously be a part of his duty to collect "renewals," i.e., the succeeding quarterly and annual subscriptions, and the plan after all is nothing more than the establishment of machinery such as is common in large Trade Union branches for the regular payment of contributions and extension of membership. We should like to hear from Watford again.

OUR POSTER COMPETITION.

Some encouraging entries have been received for the LABOUR ORGANISER great poster competition. At the same time, the entries so far received for certain classes are by no means so numerous as the value of the prizes justifies. Personal contact with certain of our friends who could do creditable work assures us that bashfulness, and perhaps, too, a want of push and go, have so far prevented them entering. Don't complain if, in the future, *your* name and *your* ability is unknown (or if you are an agent, or a printer, that your letterpress skill and powers of appeal have secured you no advertisement or recognition). The LABOUR ORGANISER is out to find **talent** and happily it has so far succeeded in certain classes of this competition. We have already found some able men, and we shall boom them. We shall hope to make them known, to get their work upon the walls, and to see Labour more successful, and they too, because of their enterprise and skill. What about *you*, and that friend of yours? Beyond all the prize-money is the service to Labour. Does *that* appeal?



THE SOUTH WALES BY-ELECTIONS.

The two magnificent victories at the recent by-elections must be exceedingly gratifying to the election agents concerned, *viz.*, Mr. W. Harris (Abertillery) and Mr. T. I. Mardy Jones (Rhondda West).

Mr. Jones had a particularly up-hill fight, and had six trained election agents opposed to him, with no outside trained assistance on his side. The side opposed to Mr. Harris was possessed of seven—an unfortunate coincidence—for they fell even more heavily. As an instance of the strenuous labour put into these contests we may mention that Mr. Harris had 750 canvassers all told, and estimates that 1,000 scouts were on duty for him between 5 and 8 p.m. on the day of the poll. Congratulations to both gentlemen, and to the candidates, because of them.

LAW AND PRACTICE.

[Under this heading we propose to print brief and chatty explanations of points of commoner interest concerning the Law and Practice of Elections. Readers are invited to suggest points for notice herein, but are reminded that suggestions made may not necessarily be dealt with in the next issue.—ED.]

Some Questions Answered.

By THE EDITOR.

A number of questions have reached me this month bearing on matters dealt with in this column, and I therefore propose to deal with them here. Correspondents are asked to note that questions of general interest only can be answered. Where mere information is required on particular or urgent matters the inquiry should be addressed to the Labour Party.

Can you explain your reference to "expenses in expectation" in last month's LABOUR ORGANISER? How would these occur? A recollection of the circumstances under which candidates are sometimes selected will show that occasionally a candidate would be most unwise who delayed doing anything at all till he was actually and formally accepted. An instance from my own experience will suffice. I had provisionally been appointed election agent to a candidate prior to the selection, which, if all went well, would take place on the succeeding Saturday. There was no time to lose. I got certain canvass cards and introduction cards printed, and other matter. These were certainly election expenses and would have to be returned. They were expenses "in expectation." On the Saturday we duly attended the selection meeting and the anticipated selection was made. We saved several days by being ready.

Are we not perfectly clear of incurring "election expenses" if we continue to describe our candidate as "prospective" candidate till the election comes?

Certainly not. There is no protection whatever in a phrase. That term "prospective candidate" is in my opinion often a matter of pure humbug. In the Labour Party, at any rate, a man is selected as a "candidate,"

he receives the endorsement of the Party E.C. as a candidate, and his name is published in a list of "sanctioned candidates." There is no provision in the constitution for any subsequent act by which a candidate (if one accepted the suggestion he was prospective only) might become fully fledged. Nor, as pointed out in last month's article, does the law lay down any precise moment when a man crosses the Rubicon. It has merely been laid down that election expenses, *whenever incurred*, should be returned. How can calling your man "prospective candidate" affect this?

It comes back to the question, why incur election expenses? There is no earthly need to do this. You can develop and build your Party all you like, and propagate Labour principles with ten-fold energy (it is natural that a Party with a candidate should be more active than a Party without one. It constitutes no crime); and your candidate can assist you in all this. The danger arises when you begin to advocate your candidate, instead of the principles for which you have selected him. It may seem a fine line sometimes, but it affects all Parties alike, and in the Labour Party we are much more prone to rally our forces round a Party and a principle, than around an individual.

Does not the mere fact that our candidate, who had never been in the constituency before selection, now visits it fairly often, presuppose election expenses? Oh, no! In this matter we fortunately have the fairly recent opinion of a learned election judge who said, "It by no means follows that, because a particular individual is announced as a candidate that the expenses which he incurs because he is a candidate, and which he would not incur if he were not a candidate (and which in one sense, therefore, have a reference to the future election) are expenses incurred in 'the conduct and management of the election.'" It should be remembered also that it is reasonable that a candidate should take an interest in affairs within a constituency for which he has been selected, and also in the Party and the Party organisation and activities. It would be somewhat outrageous to suggest that the expression of that interest constituted an election ex-

pense, or that a candidate might not seek to further the principles of his Party in a constituency in which he is interested without being charged with "incurring expense in the conduct and management of his election."

I have had printed this year a number of calendars with the photo of my candidate upon them. Is this illegal? Rather late to inquire, isn't it, old friend? But you are all right. No one will suppose you intend it as a bribe—it's not exactly a "bill, placard or poster," nor is it an "advertisement." (You see, I know your candidate.) Besides all this, the election is not imminent, and there are therefore no compromising circumstances. A very flagrant case of this kind once came before the courts. During the actual election, at Christmas, a costly calendar was sent to each elector, containing the candidate's photo, and that too of his wife and three daughters. This was given away to all electors, and *only* electors, while the fight was on. The expense was not "returned." The judges held that this was not an election expense, on the ground, principally, that the order had been given two months before, that calendars had been given away in other years, and further, that at Christmas it was a very general custom, and therefore would probably, in the opinion of the judges, have taken place whether the election had been on or no. But I would have liked the election agent's opinion on that point—afterwards. It would be very unwise to presume too much on this decision.

My brother has joined the Territorials. Will he now, under the new Act, be entitled to appoint a proxy? No, only members of H.M. Forces are entitled to appoint proxies who can show that there is a probability of being out of the United Kingdom, or at sea, at the time of a Parliamentary election. Territorials, however, have the right to vote if an election occurs while they are under arms. Section 23 of the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act, 1907, says: "An officer or man of the Territorial Force shall not be liable to any penalty or punishment for or on account of his absence during the time he is voting, at any election of a Member to serve in Parliament, or during the time he is going to or returning from such voting."

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at a Parliamentary Election in
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THE PARTY PRESS AND PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT.

Appointment of Mr. W. W. Henderson.

We have pleasure in recording that the vacancy in the Secretaryship of the Party Press and Publicity Department, created by the retirement of Mr. Tracy, has been filled by the appointment of Mr. W. W. Henderson, who has for a long time worked in close connection with his present office.

We believe Mr. Henderson is sympathetically inclined, to a much closer connection than exists between the Party Publicity Department and those responsible for organisation in the constituencies. The growth of the Party's publicity work has taken place side by side with the growth of its power in the constituencies, and there is a measure of inter-dependence that if fairly appreciated on all sides should make immeasurably for the success of the Party. The enlightened policy here indicated is, we feel sure, one that it is intended will be pursued, and every agent and secretary in the country will reciprocate. The commercial side of the Party's publications especially depends on the constituencies, and occasional consultations and suggestions from those interested in this work will be valuable in attaining efficiency, both in and for the Department. A readier appreciation by the outside workers of the Party of the value and resources of the Department would also be invaluable. The ramifications and working of the Publicity Department are none too well-known and under Mr. W. W. Henderson there is little doubt that every endeavour will be made to seek the co-operation of all who can contribute to the effectiveness of this important side to Party work.



NEXT MONTH.

In next month's issue we shall begin a special series of articles by the Editor on "The Constitution of the Labour Party" with special reference to the working of the constitution in various types of constituencies. The articles will contain interpretations of difficult points, and much valuable information concerning the local working of the Party machinery.

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS.

Swindon and Stroud have both under consideration the question of the issue of a weekly journal. Here is an illustration of the value of co-operation as advocated by the LABOUR ORGANISER. From a South-Western or West Midland centre a number of such journals could be run with immense advantages to all.

King's Lynn is considering a business proposition concerning the issue of a weekly.

The *Labour Record* is a new Cardiff monthly issued for the first time during the late Municipal Elections. Its layout is attractive, and it is interesting to note that the Co-operative Society are large advertisers.

In the Midlands there exists already a group of associated Labour newspapers, printed by the National Labour Press, at Leicester. The extension of present co-operation is aimed at, and it is obvious that what is beneficial when only locally applied has still greater advantages if nationally adopted.

The *Bermondsey Labour News* is a well-printed and exceptionally vigorous local monthly. It suffers a distinct disadvantage in not being a weekly journal, for the style of its get-up—almost American in some respects—does suggest anti-climax when taken in conjunction with its periodical publication. The style is precisely that for a live weekly, and it would be one of the best and brainiest at that. Go ahead, Bermondsey! Multiply by four and you're "IT."

The *Rother Valley Monthly Journal* is seeking extension on the right lines by endeavouring to secure the co-operation of other Divisions in promoting additional editions. This journal is noteworthy for the number of articles by leading men which it contains. Its business side is efficiently conducted, and a future lies before it.

Wellingborough has now "joined up" and its Labour newspaper is going price 2d.

DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTIONS.

The Early Stages.

(Continued.)

The circumstances differ widely under which the actual elections will be conducted when the contests are really "on." In large and scattered rural districts the various units of the Labour fighting army will rarely meet, perhaps not know one another, and be held together only by the influence of a few workers able to get over the different parts of the area. For certain urban councils the contest will in no wise differ from that of an election to an ordinary borough council, except, of course, that it is taken under a different Act. Others, again, will have a mixed type of "constituency" partly rural, partly urban, and for whom it is always difficult to prescribe the ideal organisation. Some urban districts will also be divided into wards; others will not, while again, some councils will come out *en bloc*, and in others but a third of the members will retire.

It may be taken as an axiom that few places will be able to put the full machinery of a parliamentary contest into the field, and I shall not attempt in these articles to outline a scheme of organisation beyond the reach of Parties who have to deal with practical situations and limited resources.

The principal work for this month should consist of quiet personal interviews for the purpose of arousing interest and getting workers. At your Party meeting get away, at once, from that hazy sense of the fight being everybody's business (which means nobody's) and get down to personal responsibility. The secretary should have prepared a list of names of ward secretaries, present and past workers, people who have or might do something. Now, instead of sending a communication through the post or letting these people wait till they see your announcement on the hoardings, arrange a short list for each member of your committee, whose duty it will be to carry by word of mouth the good tidings to these people that you are going to fight. You will find this works far better than anything else. People like to have news to give away, people like to have it carried to them,

and the dozens of little gossips that you have thus so innocently arranged have an astonishing effect on your own Party workers whose enthusiasm has been tickled, and on the others to whom you have sent. You have also sent your missionaries out telling secrets. The news, however, will travel well and far cheaper than by poster announcements. The people who matter in local politics will soon know all about it and you have secured an effective advertisement at no cost.

There is nothing whatever you can do at present more important than this subterranean movement among the Party friends and acquaintances. A general canvass isn't worth while, and in any case would have to be done again. It is workers you want (and talkers too) and the steady mouth-to-mouth campaign, coupled with the systematic enrolment of workers, is the deadliest form of organisation and the most demoralising to the enemy that can be conceived.

Next to the individual touch comes work among the Unions. Every branch should be asked to receive a deputation. The wise secretary not only relies on his letter to the branch, but he knows members who will help in that matter and make endeavours that the deputation shall receive the maximum of consideration and assistance.

Deputations to T.U. branches are often not productive of as much good as they might be, because of the failure to handle the situation properly. Don't send speakers who cannot finish up in ten minutes on a note of enthusiasm. What is wanted is *work* and *assistance* from the branch, and not a pious resolution. Know what you want, and go prepared to get it; if you cut down the oratory you stand a better chance. I have found it *pay* in some places to get a branch to appoint a special committee to further the candidate's interests, to secure the full poll of its members, or to be responsible for a workshop canvass of a particular works. You may want money; get to know your way about it first. You may want workers and immediate helpers. I have found it the best way to go armed with a number of small cards with "queries" on them that want clearing up—the old electioneer knows what I mean, a question concerning a particular voter, information

required about some hall, or site for committee room, etc., etc. If you find you can't get going in a general appeal for names of helpers, the reading out of one or two of these simple queries immediately secures you volunteers to clear them up. They can do that. The ice is broken, and you can get on. In fact, scores of people would help us if only the work was made simple. The uninitiated is afraid of the onerous tasks he fancies are intended for him, but electioneering is for you to simplify, and the training and breaking in of workers is the most neglected yet most essential performance of the art.

There is one thing more this month. It is raising money. Don't leave it till the election is on you and you don't know what can be spent. It is perfectly safe to run a good social or similar function for this purpose, but don't turn it into an election meeting.

Next month we shall discuss equipment for the election.

(To be continued.)

Points from Last Month.

1. Select candidates early.
2. Don't beat about manoeuvring where you're going to fight—fight!
3. Hold meetings of candidates for discussion of functions as elected persons and spread of knowledge concerning powers and duties of body to be elected to.
4. If a Labour group already on body referred to, permit candidates to attend meetings of group.
5. Get Labour Party "Handbook of Local Government" as guide to candidates.



OUR AGENTS AT HOME.

We regret that owing to pressure on our space, this feature has again been held over for the present month.

See that all your Delegates read the February "LABOUR ORGANISER." It will help them and you.

ASSOCIATION NEWS.

New appointments not previously announced in the LABOUR ORGANISER are: Mr. F. A. Jarman, Taunton; Mr. F. T. Scanlon, Wallsend; Councillor W. Locke, Newcastle East. Several other new appointments are pending.

We understand that Mr. E. Robinson (Grimsby) is relinquishing his appointment and seeking a change. Mr. Robinson was Jack Mill's agent in the great Dartford victory in March last. Mr. A. E. Rivers (Frome) has also relinquished his agency.

London agents are to hold their first Annual Dinner in March. Will other districts please follow, placing the General Secretary (of course) on the free list? The dinner is to be followed by a social function, and travelling expenses will be pooled.

Thirteen new members have been received into the London District during the half-year just ended. At a well-attended meeting on December 10th it was decided to invite the National Agent, Mr. E. P. Wake, to address the next meeting, and to make arrangements for candidates and other persons (business and advertising experts were suggested) to address future meetings.

Yorkshire and the North-Eastern Districts have both held useful meetings during December. Mr. E. Gibbin, the North-Eastern National District Organiser, spoke at the Yorkshire meeting, and arrangements have been made for Mrs. Fenn to address the next gathering.

At both the East and West Midland District meetings resolutions were passed welcoming and volunteering every assistance to the newly appointed National Woman Organiser, Mrs. Fawcett.

Lancashire agents met on December 8th, at Bolton, and meet again on January 11th, at Manchester. The South Wales and South-Western Districts are busy hunting up information concerning one or two recently appointed agents who have not yet joined their association.

IN THE COURTS.

Of Importance to Election Agents.

A case of considerable importance to all persons acting at any time as election agents was recently heard in a Scottish Court of Session. The cause was a petition for relief, by the Labour candidate and agent at the North Edinburgh by-election, for inadvertent delay in filing the election accounts. It appeared that immediately after the poll the candidate went on holiday, and, although the agent made strenuous efforts to get in touch with him, the accounts and declarations were not tendered till some days after they were due, when the returning officer declined to accept them as duly lodged. He, however, marked them as tendered on the date presented, and took the papers into his custody.

The law as it stands provides that an election agent must transmit his return and declaration within 35 days of the declaration of the poll, the candidate having 7 days after the actual filing of the accounts in which to lodge a similar declaration. Failure to comply within the time allowed constitutes an "illegal practice," punishable on conviction with a fine of £100 and incapacity for 5 years.

Provision is made in Section 34 of the Corrupt Practices Act whereby an agent or candidate may apply on certain specified grounds to the courts for "an authorised excuse" (*i.e.*, relief) which, if obtained, operates as an absolution for the offence—hence the present application. From the facts it would appear that the agent held his accounts back until he could also file his candidate's declaration. Conceivably he did this because of the obligation on a candidate to examine the accounts before declaring; agents, however, should remember it is unnecessary to get late on this account, as although it is desirable to lodge both declarations together, if the candidate is not available to examine the accounts when the agent's declaration is due, they can afterwards be inspected at the returning officer's office.

A peculiar feature of this case is the arbitrary action of the returning officer in declining to acknowledge the papers as duly lodged. No justification for this action can be found in any Act of Parliament. The agent's tort was no justification, and a refusal

might equally be made on the ground of some irregularity in the accounts. Returning officers who abrogate to themselves the power here exercised are, in our opinion, acting wrongly. Certainly the acceptance of the papers doesn't relieve the depositors of any liability for lateness, but a claim by the returning officer that the papers are not "duly lodged" might easily lead to a refusal of examination of them by a member of the public!

It appears the declarations were lodged on the 40th day instead of the 35th, but most clearly the candidate complied with the law in filing his declaration at the same time as the agent. Indeed he had actually 7 days to spare! The extraordinary refusal to acknowledge the returns did, however, apparently compel the candidate to make an application as if no accounts had been filed (Section 34, sub. 2), which is the only reason we can discover for his application; for the law does *not* make the candidate jointly liable for the return of expenses. It merely demands a declaration, and throws an onus on him to move the courts to compel the presentation of accounts, if he cannot get the facts to make his declaration upon.

A further striking feature of this case was the ridiculous attitude of the Lord President of the Court towards "unprofessional" (*i.e.*, non-lawyer) election agents. His lordship went out of his way to rate the candidate (himself a legal gentleman) for not employing a lawyer, and made it pretty clear that he regarded election agencies as plums for his own profession. We beg to differ. There is not a line nor a clause in the whole of the Acts relating to elections that justifies this grasping legal suggestion. As well lay it down that because he must know the Health Laws, a sanitary inspector must be a lawyer, or that bum bailiffs ought to "take silk."

In the end the Court granted "an authorised excuse" to the candidate, but refused it to the agent. We sympathise, especially as the latter was the gentleman who hadn't had the holiday. We have reason, however, to hope that the case is closed and not even opponents would wish otherwise!

There is, however, an important moral for election agents in the above judgments. Recently it was said by

an important Trade Union official—very closely connected, too, with the official side of the Labour Party—that any out-of-work member of his Union could do the agent's work. Will that gentleman kindly interview the Lord President of the Court of Sessions? A close study of Election Law is absolutely essential. An ill-equipped agent is a positive danger to his Party and his candidate. Rule of thumb won't do, the agent's part is no job for amateurs, and should you come under the courts your non-legal training may itself, instead of being an excuse, be taken as an aggravation. The agent who knows all the "isms" and doesn't know the law is just matter in the wrong place.



LOOSE-LEAF SYSTEM v. CARD INDEX.

A Registration Tip.

Comparatively few Labour organisations are yet awake to the advantages of the loose-leaf system for certain purposes. Card indexing is comparatively widely used, but cards have manifest disadvantages. Rapid or consecutive reference is not always easy (except with certain special systems); there is a degree of clumsiness, and the ever-present danger of a lovely spill and disarrangement when a quantity of cards are taken out of the drawer.

The membership records of the Labour Agents' Association are kept on the loose-leaf system. This is a case in point. The alterations are not frequent, hence as the book can be opened and a leaf taken out in an instant, there is no need of the permanent detachment of each record as secured by cards. Every system of indexing available for card indexing is also available for the loose-leaf book, and alphabetical, geographical or numerical tabs can be arranged on the three available sides of the book. The great value of the loose-leaf record system is its portability. Unlike cards, the whole thing can be carried about without risk.

The loose-leaf system is particularly adaptable for registration canvasses. Under the old and best system, the canvasser visited each house each year, and wrote the occupier's name in his book, which, of course, was freshly supplied for each canvass. This entailed much labour, and fresh expense

on each occasion. Registration canvasses done straight from the old register were rarely satisfactory.

When it is decided in any area that registration canvasses should be done, and it may sometimes be done with other work, I strongly recommend that the loose-leaf system should be adopted. It may not be possible to adopt it all at once, probably nowhere could that be done, but adopted gradually, the initial expense is the only expense, time and worry is saved, simplicity and clearness is attained, and the canvassers have always a solid book to handle instead of flimsy sheets.

Briefly explained, there is a leaf for every house, preferably octavo size. The worker uses one leaf for each house.

The necessary particulars are taken of each person thought to be entitled to a vote. A book is made up for each "block" or each polling district as convenience dictates. It is obvious that almost the whole work comes on the first canvass, but certainly not more than the writing up required by the older system. On subsequent canvasses it is only necessary to confirm or correct the information already in the book. Where this work is done the agent gets the nearest possible attainment to a perfect register. There is no other royal road.

I recently saw an instance where this system had been in operation for some years, but had fallen into disuse since the extension of the franchise and the enormous expansion of the register; there was also a shortage of staff for the many other activities engaged in. Here it could hardly be again taken up, except in districts gradually and one at a time, as I advocate for places where the system is installed for the first time. There is also in this case a secure Labour majority. But there are places where an incomplete register might easily make the difference between victory and defeat, and there is no method so well adapted to secure that *all* supporters are "on." It was recently said by authorities with great experience of recent by-election work that more Labour voters than ever were "off" who ought to be "on" in some districts, and especially where post-war fluctuations in industry have taken place some attempt ought to be made to remedy this state of affairs.

Efficiency!

The call for more Efficiency in every administration is greater to-day than ever before.

DO NOT LOOK UPON THE ADOPTION OF
THE CARD SYSTEM, VERTICAL FILING
AND LOOSE LEAF SYSTEMS AS AN
EXPERIMENT.

Trade Union Offices in many parts of the Country have adopted up-to-date methods.

Write for particulars of—

**MEMBERSHIP RECORDS,
TRADE UNION REGISTERS,
LISTS OF CONSTITUENTS,
VERTICAL FILING FOR CORRESPONDENCE,
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CANVASS.**



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MEETINGS IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS.

The Cheapest and Most Effective Plan.

Perhaps the commonest difficulty in county divisions is that of effectively advertising meetings in country districts. The tendency is therefore for all parties to neglect them, and I have recently come across three instances of remote villages where for 20 years or more no political meeting had been held. But such places pay for attention; the audiences are there *if they know about the meeting*, and such audiences—eager, attentive, intelligent, awaiting the message.

Poster work is of little use in such places, there are only the gate-posts, the telegraph-posts (maybe), and an odd gable-end. Such work is expensive, it is resented, and after all it doesn't touch the by-ways and the hidden houses. Handbill work again is laborious if voluntary, prohibitive if fair rates for time are to be paid. And it rarely can be satisfactory.

But cost for cost, result for result, there is a cheaper and nearly infallible way. It is the personal duplicated circular, the typed letter multiplied on the duplicator, ("imitation type-writing") and sent through the post in suitable envelopes to each elector. Work it out. On the one hand, the cost of printing, the cost of distribution, and electors missed, perhaps offended. On the other hand your paper and envelopes only, plus the postage, and the certainty of reaching everybody. The postage is $\frac{1}{4}$ d., but such circulars should be tied in bundles and handed over the counter at a post office, attention being drawn to the fact that they are imitation type-writing.

Further, besides reaching everybody there is a tremendous difference in the effect. A handbill is thrown away and forgotten. A letter in the home is read, probably discussed and often kept in sight. It can be made the medium of other expressions than the mere announcement of the meeting. It can be made to pull, to bring your elector to the meeting, and even half convert him on the road. Below will be found an admirably worded circular used for the purposes above-mentioned. Note the persuasive tone, the interest aroused all through before, in the last

paragraph, we come to the particulars of the meeting. Compare with a handbill shouting MEETING across its face—sometimes all that's needed to secure its own prompt destruction and failure.

Labour Party Offices,
7, Paradise Parade,
King's Lynn.
November 22nd, 1920.

Dear Sir (or Madam),

The most discussed Party to-day is the Labour Party. It is also the most rapidly growing Party. Many people believe that it will soon be entrusted with the responsibility of governing this country.

Therefore, the position of the Labour Party in regard to such questions as War and Peace, Ireland, The League of Nations, The Land, Wages and Prices, Unemployment, etc.,

will no doubt be of absorbing interest to you as it is to millions more of the people of this country.

No matter what your position in life may be, no matter what may be your present political views, it is important that you should get acquainted with the policy of the Labour Party.

I have very great pleasure, therefore, in inviting you and your friends to a PUBLIC MEETING on WEDNESDAY NEXT, the 24th inst., at the School-room, Tilney-cum-Islington. The Chair will be taken at 7.30 p.m.

May I have the pleasure of seeing you there?

Yours sincerely,
H. STEPHENS,
Agent and Gen. Sec.



THE NEW ELECTORS' LISTS.

What Should be done on January 15th.

On January 15th the new electors' list will be published in all constituencies, and immediately agents and secretaries should get busy seeking to perfect the register by the addition of supporters left off, and objection to persons wrongfully on.

It should be noted that the "recognised agent" of each political party in a Division is entitled to two free copies of the list. The "list" is now held to consist of (a) the existing register and (b) the sundry lists of

alterations prescribed to be published but if an agent has *already* received his free copies of the register (as is intended should be the case) he doesn't get two more. It is opportune to mention here that an agent may elect to have his copies of the register printed on one side only, but he must give notice in time for the printer to be so instructed. "Recognised agent" does not necessarily mean a paid agent, and may include secretaries, *part-time* or honorary agents. If a person is appointed by his Party to do registration work, and is the official mouth-piece of his Party, the definition is reasonably complied with.

Undoubtedly the one method by which the greatest number of imperfections in the list can be discovered is by an independent canvass of all the houses in the constituency. To-day, however, unless an election is thought to be imminent this special registration canvass is more honoured in the breach than in the observance by the orthodox parties, unless done in particular areas only, or in wealthily financed Divisions. It obviously should have been accomplished before now, so that the information obtained might be ready for comparison with the lists when published. I shall therefore confine this article to an assumption that no canvass has been done, and that normal records only are available. Registration canvasses, however, should not be neglected, although canvasses for membership are so much more important. The article on another page dealing with loose-leaf books for registration purposes indicates the best method. Few Labour Parties can employ paid labour in this matter, so that the work of necessity should be done at the same time as other visitations or canvasses are made. It is not a difficult thing for visitors to houses in a street to make inquiries confirming the names of occupiers and to ask after other residents in the house.

There is a tendency, where there is no paid agent, to entirely neglect registration work. This is a blunder, for obviously much can be done by Ward and Polling District Committees in collecting and sifting information from their own Districts. Nevertheless a central control is necessary, and one officer should be found specifically charged with co-ordinating the work.

Under the present system of publishing the *additions* to the register in one list, and the *subtractions* in another, the laborious task of checking the old register by new list to discover alterations is done away with. The work to be done now will therefore resolve itself chiefly into checking the two lists to see that each addition and subtraction is correct, and into examining the mass of material that may have been collected or to hand, in order to discover omissions or improper titles.

The question of how to collect information and to work consistently towards a perfect register throughout the year is outside the scope of this article. Every Party has got *something* to work upon. *The real registration work, then, to be done to-day consists of making queries, investigating them, and making claims or objections as the case may be.*

On page 15 will be found a "query slip." It will be noted that down the centre is a perforation. Imagine the page torn out, and folded along the perforation. Insert now a piece of carbon paper, and write on page 1. You will note that what is written falls exactly on the appropriate line on page 3. It is intended that when you make a query the top part shall be kept as a record, and the bottom part (pages 3 and 4) be sent to a suitable worker to clear up the query for you.

As to making queries, first get at each addition. If you have no information concerning them write out a slip. What you want to know is when they came to reside at the address given, or the previous address, with a view to ascertaining if qualified. You may want other information in certain cases. If a woman you want a worker's opinion that she is of qualifying age, or information from the lady herself. So with the persons knocked off the register. Have they left? Where gone to? Who lives there now? If Labour supporters, are they entitled? And so forth.

Having dealt with the "lists" on these lines, now get at every scrap of information you have concerning supporters. Are all your delegates on the register? Individual members? Wives and relations of members? Look up all *past* delegates, lapsed members, persons who have helped in social functions, workers at last election. Are

they all on? If not—a query slip. If you have a Trade Union register compare with the register; and what about their wives?

It will be noted that the first attempt to systematically compare any extensive lists of names with the register is a big job. But do it! Once done, in future it is merely the *alterations* in your records, and the additions and subtractions in the register to worry about. So, too, if you have strength enough to systematically tackle the question of the *wives* who are not on, the information obtained will not in most cases require further trouble, though the effort will have well repaid itself.

I will leave alone to-day the question of dealing with information scientifically collected all the six months round by a wide-awake agent. The man who has done that doesn't need this article. But a word about objections. The person who quixotically holds that he won't make objections is out-of-date. The old excuse for this attitude depended on the insufficiency of the then franchise laws. But with the present wide franchise the men or women to whom objection can be taken are mostly entirely out of it, and it is generally not on a mere technicality that objection can be taken, but because it would be an outrage on justice that the name should remain. It is madness to suffer a laxity to the other side which is not extended to yours.

Queries should be sent out as made, and the workers holding them should themselves be followed up if not promptly returned. Time is the essence of the whole thing, for neither claim nor objection can be made after the appropriate date has expired.

An admirable suggestion was recently made at a joint conference of the men and women national organisers of the Party. It was there suggested that the Women's Sections are ideal machinery for dealing with queries. To visit a house to make an inquiry for registration purposes is in practice a much more pleasant task than election canvassing, and the reception correspondingly more cordial. Queries can also generally be better dealt with in the day-time. A lively Women's Section could make short work of several hundred queries.

[On this subject read also "The New Act Relating to Absent Voters" (October issue) and "Dates for the Spring Register" (November issue).]



OFFSIDE !

Shall we Claim a Penalty ?

One of the bold bad agents of the Party tells me he is writing an overture for full orchestra on the theme of "The Red Flag." He is competent to do it, being a musical star, of sorts (not being musical I can't particularise), conductor of two orchestras, and editor of a musical journal. Undoubtedly these are useful accomplishments, and Stroud will have to look to its laurels. The agent who can imitate the Pied Piper of Hamelin, taking the polling stations *en route*, has certainly got a future—though it may be cut short in some dreadful manner if that overture materialises. Besides "The Red Flag" is already subject to great abuse. I know an agent who professes to love it, but he never sings it unless at some miserable, half-hearted meeting where the Doxology would be more in keeping. And there are happier themes. Why not give us "The Agent's Lament" on those fruitful and frequent occasions when the election has been lost, and the agent, of course, gets the blame; or "The Candidate's Cake-walk" on those other occasions when the agent has won, and Mr. Candidate, of course, corrals all the glory?

Seriously, agents must have mixed qualifications, as they have mixed duties. There is another gentleman who, in his constituency, is a true father of his people. He makes a point of acting as best man at most of the funerals, and second best man at many of the weddings. I think he was an insurance man once, anyway he also gets in at the christenings, the comings of age, and once nearly figured in a divorce. He also sings, which is a pity—but then I am not musical. Which is one reason why I can't appreciate that overture to "The Red Flag"—it might make me shudder.

URGENT. REGISTRATION QUERY SLIP.

From A. E. MEREDITH, Labour Agent,
29, Comberton Hill, Kidderminster.

To:

DATE.....

PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION OF KIDDERMINSTER.

P.D. No..... WARD

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

INFORMATION REQUIRED.

SEE OTHER SIDE.

NOTES ON THE USE OF**STANDARD REGISTRATION QUERY SLIPS.**

- ¶ Cut carbon paper to size of slip when folded. Although the forms slightly differ, the required matter will copy into its appropriate position on the duplicate.
- ¶ As lists of names of supporters, etc., are gone through with the registers, all queries arising should be immediately written up.
- ¶ To delay may result in a supporter remaining off the register, or it may continue a misdescription that will invalidate a nomination paper.
- ¶ The duplicate is intended to be sent to a worker in the Ward. The top copy should be retained.
- ¶ Schemes for following up or filing queries will be readily thought out by the Agent.

Tear off along Perforation

TO THE WORKER RECEIVING THIS SLIP.

The information asked for on the front of this form is required for the purpose of seeing that the person named is correctly entered on the register of voters.

You are earnestly asked to ascertain the facts and return this slip immediately to address given at top of form on other side.

ANSWER TO INFORMATION REQUIRED.

REGISTRATION QUERY SLIP.

THE ORGANISER WILL INSERT BELOW THE NAME OF WORKER TO WHOM THIS SLIP IS SENT.

DATE

PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION OF KIDDERMINSTER.

P.D. No. WARD

NAME

Address

STATE CLEARLY BELOW THE NATURE OF QUERY.

SEE OTHER SIDE.

Tear off along Perforation.

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

A MONTHLY TECHNICAL JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE
ORGANISATION OF LABOUR.



SUBSCRIPTION RATES :

Per Copy 4d. Post Free 4½d.		
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Half-yearly -	2/3	
Yearly -	4/6	



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ADVERTISEMENT RATES SENT ON APPLICATION.

Contributions on subjects suitable for this journal are invited, and should be sent to H. Drinkwater, Editor, Whittington, near Worcester.

"AT HOME" TO 1,600.

A Successful Function that is Well Worth Imitation.

The annual "At Home" of the Blackburn Labour Party was recently held, followed on the next day by the Annual Demonstration. No less than 1,600 persons paid for admission to the "At Home," while the Prince's Theatre was packed at 6d. per head to hear Mr. Phillip Snowden's annual oration. This is organisation that most Parties will envy, but it must be remembered it is the result of some years of successful work on the part of Mr. G. R. Shepherd, who recently left the Division to take up his headquarters appointment, as announced in the LABOUR ORGANISER. The "At Home" (to which the admission was 1s.) was used as the occasion for a well-earned presentation to Mr. Shepherd on his leaving the constituency, and was also the occasion of a welcome to

Mr. G. B. Eddie on his taking up office as successor.

We understand that sums in the neighbourhood of £100 have some years been realised at the two functions referred to, and Local Parties desirous of both adding to their income and of promoting the social life of their movement might well note that there is time yet to hold this winter the first of some similar annual function, that might in time rival the magnificent success reported above. Much depends on *how* you do it, but who says Blackburn is the only place that knows how?



NOTICE.

Subscribers are respectfully requested to note that no back numbers are available of Nos. 1, 2 or 3 of the LABOUR ORGANISER.

Our Competition Scheme for Labour Poster Artists.

BOARD OF ADJUDICATORS.

We have pleasure in announcing that the following gentlemen have kindly consented to act as Judges in the LABOUR ORGANISER Competition for Poster Artists :—

Mr. EGERTON P. WAKE (National Agent, The Labour Party)

The Rt. Hon. JOHN HODGE, M.P.

Mr. SIDNEY WEBB, and

Mr. A. G. WALKDEN (General Secretary, Railway Clerks' Association)

IS
OFFERED
IN PRIZES

£25

BY THE
EDITOR OF THE
"LABOUR ORGANISER"

For the Discovery and Encouragement of Labour Poster Artists.

OUR SCHEME EXPLAINED.

As briefly announced in our last issue, the LABOUR ORGANISER proposes to conduct a Competition for substantial Money Prizes among Poster Artists of all classes (Illustrators, Cartoonists, Litho Artists and Letterpress Printers) with the following objects :—

- (1) The discovery of fresh talent, and the introduction to the Labour Movement of Artists capable of adding to the effectiveness of its mural literature.
- (2) To secure from our readers, for early adoption, suitable designs or impressions for posters that are fitted for standardised reproduction on a commercial basis, for the use of Labour candidates and Local Parties throughout the country. Designs approved by the Adjudicators will be offered to the Labour Party, or other suitable quarters, for this purpose.

Closing Date Extended to 31st JANUARY, 1921.

We desire it to be understood that the prize-money offered is not necessarily limited to £25. Additional or increased Prizes will be given should the merit and number of entries warrant that course.

Our Competition Scheme for Labour Poster Artists.

LIST OF PRIZES AND RULES.

CLASS I.

FOR "THE MARCH OF THE WORKERS."

£10

TEN POUNDS is offered for the best Cartoon, in one or three colours, depicting "The March of the Workers." A ground (or white) is desired in suitable place for short localised election message, or artist may suggest and depict a general message.

All rejected attempts in this class will, if desired, be returned to senders.

CLASS II.

£7/10

SEVEN POUNDS, TEN SHILLINGS is offered for the best Cartoon, in one or three colours, illustrating from the artist's own idea the general appeal of Political Labour. The same rule as to neutral ground for localisation purposes will apply (with the same exception) as in Class I.

£7/10

A SECOND PRIZE of £7 10s., or that sum divided into Second and Third Prize, will be given only if sufficient entries are secured.

CLASS III.

£5

FIVE POUNDS is offered for the most effective letterpress Poster design suitable for printing off in quantity for later localisation. Designs may contain a block or letterpress illustration, but striking and pleasing design and gripping power will be the guiding principle in judging attempts sent in. Paper may be either white, red or gold. Competitors able to send their attempts ready printed should do so, but if sketches are sent marginal notes should indicate size, name and character of type suggested, standard thicknesses of rule used, etc., and the same with ornaments.

CLASS IV.

£2/10

This sum is offered for the best displayed Meeting Bill. Letterpress printers may send samples of work *already done*, or sketches (under the rules laid down in Class III.) of a suggested Meeting Bill of ordinary wording. Taste, general attractiveness, and appeal will again decide the issue.

NOTES TO COMPETITORS.

Competitors enter on the distinct understanding that all attempts sent in become the property of the LABOUR ORGANISER and cannot be returned. An exception will be made for Class I.

Competitors are requested to make no markings on the front of their attempts that would lead to identification. The name and address should in all cases be written on the back. Cartoonists will be given an opportunity to sign their work before reproduction if desired.

All attempts must reach the EDITOR (H. Drinkwater, Whittington, near Worcester) on or before 31st January, 1921. Registered post is advisable in certain classes.

The EDITOR reserves the right to withdraw any prize or prizes if the number of attempts sent in are, in his opinion, inadequate to ensure competition.

Closing Date Extended to 31st JANUARY, 1921.

LABOUR AGENTS
NEED A CYCLE.

SPECIAL OFFER



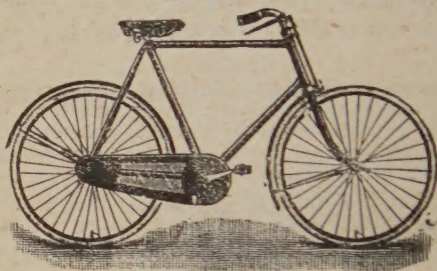
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AND CHILDREN
WANT THEM TOO.

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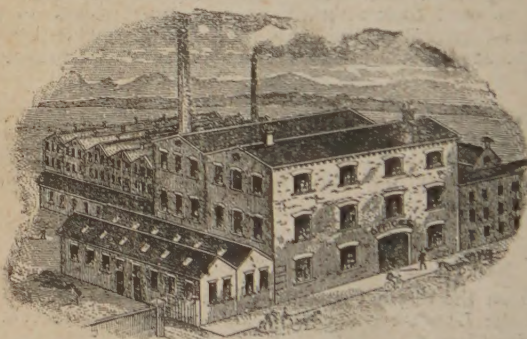
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A New Grade, at a price to bring down prices .. £9 0 0 nett.
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SAVE THE MIDDLEMAN'S PROFIT—AND BUY DIRECT.